

The Bug-out bag, or BOB, is a contemporary physical manifestation of all our fears and anxieties; it's their hypothetical antidote, too. Made of mostly store or internet bought items, it is the paranoid consumer's response to a fantasy apocalypse which may or may not happen in the near future. Derived from the military aviator's Bail-out bag—a device meant to help downed pilots survive as they await rescue—today's BOB is intended to facilitate an individual's quick evacuation from a disaster zone, and aid in their survival for anywhere between 24 and 72 hours, or longer. Generally comprised of a “tactical” or hiking pack, a series of multipurpose tools, water, nonperishable foods, lights, first aid supplies, maps and navigation gear, waterproof matches and, generally, some sort of weapon, they are not that dissimilar from a general hiking pack. However, their purpose and specificity differentiates them from their more outdoorsy cousin. One particularly compelling component, without which no BOB is complete, is the *entrenching tool*, or *e-tool*, the hallmark of any proper BOB. What is an e-tool you might ask? Is it some sort of new Apple product? Does it help you read your emails? No; it is a foldable shovel.

Popular among survivalists and a major topic in contemporary *prepper* culture (but also prevalent in ordinary families,) BOBs are indicative of a society that does not believe in its own viability. They represent a mind-set that is prepared for the end of the world, and imply a population of people who expect that very future. Fueled by pop culture's obsession with near future, post apocalyptic narratives such as those seen on TV's *The Walking Dead*, and in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, our desire to believe in a

not-so-distant future where civilization has collapsed and we must fight, and often kill to survive, reminds us of the more reptilian corners of our psyche. These ancient parts of ourselves generally lay dormant, but under stressful or dangerous circumstances, will always awaken, ready to remind us that self-preservation is the prime directive. Our inclination towards a fictional future in which we must kill or be killed represents a collective dissatisfaction with the state of the world today: Are we so deeply dissatisfied with our world that we subconsciously hope for it to be destroyed? Do we dream of a world where we must heroically fight to the death to save ourselves? Or have we been watching too much TV?

As xenophobia, racism, sexism, and general bigotry consumes our media and our consciences, we begin to see a world breaking apart at the seams. The reality that some of us once believed in and celebrated slowly reveals itself to be an illusion; mutual hopelessness and sadness push us ever deeper into emotional isolation; and we collectively drift further and further apart. Dwindling faith in a failing society mixed with a relentless cycle of sensationalized news and advertising causes us to retreat to the only friend we have left: shopping. As our fears of the future begin to overwhelm us, we turn to Amazon and Bass Pro Shop to calm our nerves with our favorite credit card; we probably won't live to see the next overdue notice anyway.

Here's a hypothetical scenario: Terrified by the world around us, we retreat from our families and neighbors in favor of new communities we meet while shopping for political

news and porn online. Insulated from criticism by the anonymity of chat rooms and niche forums, we feel comfortable in our new emancipated field and build a new belief system, untethered by the limits of *irl* civil discourse. Our new friends guide us in finding our new selves, and we begin to see what's really happening. Websites such as www.watchfulshepherd.com, www.diehardsurvivor.com, www.survivalife.com, and www.artofmanliness.com all remind us of our impending doom; that it is up to us to protect ourselves. So we turn to our new friends for advice and guidance in constructing our very own, unique, personalized BOB—which, as it turns out, is actually just a bunch of guns and ammo—because in tomorrow's world our smart phones won't save us, but our guns will. Afterall, what's more American than a customized, individualized, portable armory? As *RawPatriot_85* recently pointed out in a popular BOB discussion thread, “Why carry around food or supplies when you can just wait for the next unarmed Libtard to cross your path to carry it for you?”

The Bug-out bag represents a complete sculptural gesture: A highly considered and aestheticized object, it simultaneously represents its maker's chosen outward projection of the self, but also their internalized fear, anxiety, and world view. Its materiality is the result of exhaustive research, idiosyncratic preferences, and personal values. Tailored to specific corporeal dimensions, physical fitness, and dietary preferences, the BOB implies its maker's body, while its contents implies their politics. As a discrete object, a BOB encapsulates a series of imaginary narratives and scenarios which function to validate its existence. Without the actualization of these fantasies, the BOB is reduced

